



I-66 CORRIDOR REFINEMENT SOMERSET TO LONDON

**Pulaski and Laurel Counties
June 2002**



PROJECT HISTORY

The Southern Kentucky Corridor (I-66) is an economic development initiation identified in the Federal Transportation Act of 1991. The United States Congress was encouraged to provide funding for conceptual feasibility studies for designated high priority corridors. The I-66 Corridor was one of these high priority corridors identified. The purpose of the conceptual feasibility studies was guided by the following reasons outlined in the Act.

1. "The construction of the Interstate Highway System connected the major population centers of the nation and greatly enhanced economic growth in the United States."
2. "Many regions of the nation are not now adequately served by the Interstate System or comparable highways and require further highway development in order to serve the travel and economic development needs of the region."
3. "The development of transportation corridors is the most efficient and effective way of integrating regions and improving efficiency and safety of commerce and travel and further promoting economic development."

The Southern Kentucky Corridor (I-66) was studied and was determined to be economically feasible in 1998 by the University of Kentucky Transportation Center. The section of I-66 between Somerset and London was determined to have a very high priority due to system connectivity. The completion of this section will tie the Cumberland Parkway with the Daniel Boone Parkway. This will create a continuous fully controlled access roadway across Kentucky from Paducah to Hazard, a distance of over 350 miles, and will connect with three interstate highways (I-24, I-65 and I-75).

THE 1999 – 2001 CORRIDOR STUDY

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet initiated a corridor planning study on the Somerset to London priority section in 1999 for the purpose of providing a more in-depth evaluation of the corridor. The study corridor was generally defined by the Parkways and KY 80 to the north and KY 192 to the south.

STUDY PROCEDURES AND ALTERNATIVES

The corridor study developed and evaluated alternative corridors by considering a broad range of issues that included geometric criteria, access control and interchange location (including consideration of options for the interchange with Interstate 75), major areas of avoidance, and travel benefits. Additionally, recommendations from the public, elected officials and agency representatives provided input in the development of alternative corridors. Based upon the consideration of the corridor development issues identified above, nine corridor alternatives that utilized the southern, middle and northern portions of the study area, in addition to KY 80, were developed for additional study.

As part of the corridor study effort, resource agency coordination and public input was afforded to review and provide comment on each of the proposed corridors. For example, the United States Forest Service indicated that

the north alternatives would have less impact than the southern and middle alternatives, as they had fewer impacts to the Wild River area, and other environmental features. Similar sentiments were offered by most of the resource agency and public comments. Finally, an interdisciplinary team meeting was held with representatives from different divisions with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and the Federal Highway Administration to review and provide recommendations on the technical analysis results and the proposed alternatives.

CORRIDOR STUDY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Using the results of the technical analysis, public and resource agency input, and input from interdisciplinary teams within the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, a recommended corridor alternative was developed that best suited the goals and objectives of the project. Due to a variety of environmental, traffic, and cost concerns, the southern, middle and portions of the northern and KY 80 alternatives were determined to be undesirable. The N-4 Alternative Corridor was determined to be the most desirable option for I-66 corridor development due to significantly less problematic environmental and cost issues along this route and generally higher traffic service levels. However, several key recommendations were proposed for this corridor including:

- From Somerset to east of the Rockcastle River, the recommended corridor should include portions of the KY 80 corridor to the maximum extent possible.
- West of I-75, the corridor should seek to reduce the number of crossings of Sinking Creek in order to minimize potential impacts to threatened and endangered species habitats.
- Undertake more detailed design and environmental studies to finalize the location of the I-66/I-75 interchange. The interchange is expected to be located in a section that is at least one to one and a half miles north of the southbound weigh stations.

The Planning Study concluded that future project development efforts for I-66 Corridor should proceed by considering the recommended N-4 corridor alternative as a "corridor concept" for I-66.

CURRENT SCOPE OF PROJECT

The current scope of the corridor study is referred to as Phase 1A and includes the following services and time schedule.

Beginning with today's public meeting, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is gathering information on a broadened northern corridor (the recommended corridor). A consulting engineering team has partnered with the KYTC to perform field, environmental investigations, engineering studies on possible alignments, and secure additional public comments to refine this recommended corridor to a select few general project alignments. These select few general alignments will be processed through a thorough Environmental Impact Statement phase, referred to as Phase 1B.

Phase 1A should be completed in early 2003 with the identification of two or three selected alternatives to enter Phase 1B for detailed documentation that will satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Phase 1B should be completed in the Spring of 2004 with a formally approved Environmental Impact Statement document and Record of Decision by the Federal Highway Administration. Final project design and right of way acquisition can be initiated once a Record of Decision is reached with the Federal Highway Administration.

Phase 1B and beyond activities are dependent upon the condition that viable alternatives are identified in Phase 1A which basically begins today with this public meeting.